

Geranium brevicaule

BIOSTATUS

Native – Endemic taxon

CURRENT CONSERVATION STATUS

2023 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

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CATEGORY

Vascular

STRUCTURAL CLASS

Herbs - Dicotyledons other than Composites

FLOWER COLOURS


Red/Pink, White

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

Herbs 2.5–15.5 cm tall. **Rootstock** 3.2–10.5 mm diameter, without fusiform roots. **Basal leaves** in a persistent rosette; lamina 7.8–25.6 × 8.9–31.8 mm, polygonal in outline, cordate (with basal leaf segments downward), palmatifid (divided for 0.53–0.74 of its length), pilose, with appressed, eglandular hairs; segments 5–7, obtriangular, 1.4–4.7 mm at the base; petioles up to 130 mm long, with patent to retrorse, appressed, eglandular hairs 0.3–1.2 mm long; stipules 2.7–8.8 × 0.9–2.5 mm, with scattered eglandular hairs on both surfaces and on the margin.

Inflorescence with cymules 1-flowered, solitary; peduncles 0–1.1–(1.6) cm long, with patent to retrorse, eglandular hairs 0.15–1.1 mm long; bracteoles 2–6.6 × 0.6–1.3 mm, linear-lanceolate, with scattered eglandular hairs on both surfaces and on the margin; pedicels 33–430 mm long, with patent to retrorse, eglandular hairs 0.15–1.1 mm long; pedicel not overtopping the subtending leaf. **Sepals**

(3.3)–4.4–5.7–(7.1) × 1.4–3.1 mm, lanceolate, with scarious margins 0.1–0.2 mm wide, with erect-patent, eglandular hairs 0.3–0.6 mm long on the abaxial side (patent hairs 1–1.7 mm long on the margin), glabrescent adaxially. **Petals** 2.8–5.5–(6.5) × 1–3.1 mm, entire, without claw, glabrous, rarely with few cilia on the basal margin, deep pink to white. **Filaments**

1.6–3.0 mm long, yellowish, glabrous on both sides, ciliate on the basal margin, with hairs up to 0.1–0.2 mm long; anthers 0.4–0.7 × 0.2–0.7 mm, yellowish. **Nectaries** glabrous. **Gynoecium** 2–3.4 mm long, unknown color. **Fruit** 8.4–17.6 mm long; mericarps 2.2–3.6 × 1.0–1.7 mm, smooth, with erect-patent, eglandular hairs 0.2–1.1 mm long, brownish; rostrum 5.1–11.7 mm long, without a narrowed apex, with erect-patent, eglandular hairs 0.1–0.6 mm long; stigmatic remains 0.9–1.2–(1.6) mm long, with 5 hairy lobes. **Seeds** 1.5–2.8 × 0.7–1.4 mm, finely reticulate; hilum  length of perimeter.

SIMILAR TAXA

Easily recognised from other indigenous and naturalised *Geranium* species in NZ by its small, compact, growth habit, stout taproot, persistent basal leaves, very short flowering stems (mostly shorter than basal leaves) and its smooth seeds. It is a variable species and numerous colour morphs are known, the most common forms have either green or purple leaves. Plants with green mottled-purple or -brown leaves have previously been known as *G. sessiliflorum* var. *maculatum* - a colour variant no longer regarded as distinct.

DISTRIBUTION

Indigenous. North, South and Stewart Islands. In the North Island present south of Auckland. Common elsewhere. Present in south-east Australia and Tasmania.



Terawhiti Station, Wellington. Photographer: Jeremy R. Rolfe, Date taken: 01/11/2006, Licence: CC BY.



Photographer: Melissa Hutchison, Date taken: 18/10/2014, Licence: CC BY-NC.

HABITAT

Coastal to subalpine (0-1,200 m a.s.l.). In open ground such as short or tall tussock grassland, frost flats, clay pans, freshly deposited alluvium or on rock outcrops.

GENUS

Geranium

FAMILY

Geraniaceae

AUTHORITY

Geranium brevicaule Hook.f.

SYNONYMS

Geranium sessiliflorum subsp. novae-zelandiae Carolin var. novae-zelandiae; Geranium sessiliflorum var. glabrum Kunth; Geranium sessiliflorum var. maculatum G.Simpson et J.S.Thomson

TAXONOMIC NOTES

The most recent treatment of the genus confines *G. sessiliflorum* Cav. to South America (see Aedo, et al 2005). NZPCN agrees that Australasian plants do not match the South American plants, and so the earliest available name for Australasian plants is *G. brevicaule* Hook.f. but there remain problems within New Zealand plants referred by Aedo et al. (2005) to *G. brevicaule* (e.g., the status of *G. sessiliflorum* var. *arenarium* G.Simpson et J.S.Thomson, and also a range of potentially distinct races currently treated within a broad circumscription of *G. brevicaule*).

ENDEMIC TAXON

Yes

ENDEMIC GENUS

No

ENDEMIC FAMILY

No

FLOWERING

Year round

FRUITING

Year round

LIFE CYCLE AND DISPERSAL

Seed dispersed by wind and ballistic projection (Thorsen et al., 2009).

PROPAGATION TECHNIQUE

Easily grown from fresh seed. Various colour morphs have a genetic basis. With careful selection some attractive forms could be marketed. Excellent pot plant. Ideal for dry, well drained, sunny locations.

WETLAND PLANT INDICATOR STATUS RATING

FACU: Facultative Upland

Occasionally is a hydrophyte but usually occurs in uplands (non-wetlands).

ETYMOLOGY

geranium: From the Greek geranos 'crane', the fruit of the plant resembling the head and beak of this bird, hence the common name cranesbill.

brevicaule: With a short stem

NVS CODE

GERBRE

CHROMOSOME NUMBER

2n = 52

PREVIOUS CONSERVATION STATUSES

2017 | Not Threatened | Qualifiers: SO

2012 | Not Threatened

2009 | Not Threatened

2004 | Not Threatened

[Jump to current conservation status](#)

REGIONAL CONSERVATION STATUSES

Otago: 2025 | Regionally Not Threatened Help

The regional threat classification system leverages off the national assessments in the NZTCS, providing information relevant for the regional context. Otago conservation status information is sourced from the "[Conservation Status of Indigenous Vascular Plants in Otago, 2025](#)" Jarvie S et al. (2025) report.

REFERENCES AND FURTHER READING

Aedo C, Navarro C, Alarcón ML. 2005: Taxonomic revision of *Geranium* sections *Andina* and *Chilensia* (Geraniaceae). *Botanical Journal of the Linnean Society* 149: 1–68. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1095-8339.2005.00432.x>

Thorsen MJ, Dickinson KJM, Seddon PJ. 2009: Seed dispersal systems in the New Zealand flora. *Perspectives in Plant Ecology, Evolution and Systematics* 11: 285–309.

ATTRIBUTION

Fact Sheet by P.J. de Lange (8 June 2006): Description from Aedo et al. (2005).

MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.nzpcn.org.nz/flora/species/geranium-brevicaule/>

PDF DATE

27 May 2026